

Charles Chaisson



The stamp art by Charles Chaisson is an original digital portrait of Berra dressed in his Yankees cap, pinstripes, and catcher's chest protector. This is Chaisson's first project with the USPS. Antonio Alcalá was the art director and stamp designer, and the "Yogi Berra" lettering was created by Michael Doret. This stamp will be issued June 24, 2021, at the Yogi Berra Museum in Little Falls, New Jersey. Berra was a longtime resident of neighboring Montclair.

When Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans in 2005, a teenage artist named Charles Chaisson stored most of his life's work of 20 paintings in the attic of his family's home. The paintings made it through the storm unharmed, and Chaisson brought them to Laguna Beach, California, the next summer when he was the Sawdust Art Festival's guest artist. Then came the hard part: How to put a price tag on paintings laden with so much emotional value, and how to let one or more of them go forever?

At 19, Chaisson became the inspiration for the newly added Sawdust Scholars booth at the annual summer festival. It was there that ten artists who were students or recent graduates of Laguna Beach High School displayed their work and received practical advice on the business of art from working artists. Chaisson's work attracted its share of attention at the festival. As the art show's first student guest artist, he received a \$4,000 scholarship to cover travel and other expenses and had his own booth.

A talented draftsman, Chaisson had taken classes at the New Orleans Center of Creative Arts, a special art school for talented students from high schools in New Orleans, and was about to start his freshman year at the Ringling College of Art and Design, a highly regarded art school in Sarasota, Florida. But he'd had little first-hand experience selling his paintings. "Pricing, it's really hard. I asked around for help," Chaisson said.

By the end of his month at the Sawdust Art Festival, he'd sold several paintings, including two post-Katrina works, a self-portrait priced at \$700 depicting the artist with a pensive, worried expression, and a small acrylic at \$400, entitled "Recovering Faith," showing a hand rescuing a crucifix from a flood of water.

One work that was hard for him to part with was a painting that had survived the storm, a portrait of a cousin, Victoria Chester, who was 14 or 15 when she posed for him. Called “Self Esteem No. 1,” it depicts a girl looking at her reflection in a dark bowl of water. It sold for \$500. “She’s beautiful to me. I painted her just how I saw her,” Chaisson said.



Another painting that he didn’t want to sell was a portrait of his baby sister. Thanks to a generous festival-goer, it’s still in the family. The patron wrote him a check for \$1,000, and gave the painting back to Chaisson.



Charles Chaisson was born in New Orleans, Louisiana, and currently is a Brooklynbased freelance illustrator. He studied at the Ringling College of Art and Design in Florida (2006-2010) where he received his BFA. in Illustration. Upon completion of college, he moved to New York to further his education at the School of Visual Arts (2010-2012) where he received an MFA in Illustration from the Visual Essay Graduate Program. Charles’s illustration incorporate themes of fantasy juxtaposed with reality. His use of bold and pastel colors and composition add towards his conceptual and narrative work. Since September 20, 2020, Chaisson has been a professor at the Rhode Island School of Design in Providence.

His self description on social media: Queer. Visual Artist. Vegan. Lover of equity, nature, surrealism, science fiction, politics, social activism and dancing. Brooklyn, New York via New Orleans.

Some of Chaisson’s artwork is shown below. Curiously, there are stamp connections.

For more information and images of Chaisson’s artwork, visit richardsolomon.com/artists/charles-chaisson/